

Lee's absence conspicuous as Taiwan forum starts

MATSUMOTO, Nagano Pref. (Kyodo) About 150 Japanese and Taiwanese scholars, politicians and financiers kicked off a two-day symposium on bilateral relations and security in Asia here Monday, without the participation of former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui.

The theme of the 12th and final Asia Open Forum, which has been held annually in Japan and Taiwan since 1989, was "intellectual strategy for the new century."

The forum started one year after Lee became Taiwan's president and will end its discussions to reflect his retirement from politics in May.

Participants at the conference included Masao Kamei, counselor at Sumitomo Electric Industries Ltd., and Taiwanese Vice Defense Minister Chen Pi-chao.

Lee, who quit politics after 12 years in power, had expressed a desire to take part in the symposium as a private citizen.

However, China strongly opposed the visit, saying Lee is not an ordinary person and his trip to Japan would have grave consequences for Sino-Japanese ties. The Japanese government was also reluctant to issue an entry visa for Lee.

The former president sent a videotaped message to the conference, expressing regret for his absence and pledging Taiwan's contribution to enhanced cooperation and development of Asia.

The forum, arranged by Mineo Nakajima, president of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and others, has served as a meeting place for scholars, opinion makers and business leaders from both sides in the absence of diplomatic ties.

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松本市でのシンポに
参加できず遺憾の意

台湾前総統

台湾の李登輝・前総統は三十日、長野県松本市内で開幕した日本と台湾の有識者らによる国際シンポジウム(アジア・オープン・フォーラム)にビデオによるメッセージを寄せ、「松本での会議に出席できなかったことは残念な限りだと述べ、来日できなかったことに遺憾の意を表明した。同フォーラム事務局の説明によると、李氏は、日本外務省などの強い圧力でビザ申請を断念したと見られる。